



GROUP 74

POEMS FROM THE LAST BOHEMIA

**THE NEW YORK POETS'
COOPERATIVE**



GROUP 74

POEMS FROM THE NEW YORK POETS' COOPERATIVE

**Edited by
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**Introduction by
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INTRODUCTION

In April, 1969 the New York Poets' Cooperative was founded by Sabina Roseman and a number of other writers from the metropolitan area who believed that by working together and sharing their writing problems they could improve their own creativity and also foster an appreciation of poetry around New York. Thus the activity of the organization today is concentrated on two levels: the writing, editing, criticizing, public reading, and publishing of the members' own works; and the sponsoring of public poetry readings for non-member poets in order to enable the public, at little or no cost, to hear gifted but lesser-known poets read their own works. The Cooperative sponsors fifty regular public poetry readings a year and also, upon request, provides poets for readings at libraries, churches, Y's, and radio-stations. The organization is completely democratic and not committed to any particular school or style of poetry. New members are admitted solely on the basis of the quality of their work, and all members share equally in performing necessary tasks.

It is fitting then that on its fifth anniversary the Cooperative should publish an anthology displaying a cross-section of its writings. Hopefully *Group 74* will suggest that the art of poetry is alive in the New York area, in varied and vibrant forms.

— *Robert Kramer*
Winter, 1974

**GROUP 74:
POEMS FROM THE
NEW YORK POETS' COOPERATIVE**

JACOB BUSH

REMEMBRANCE OF INSUBORDINATIONS PAST

i sat with the multimillionaire
in flatlands brooklyn land of loss
of perspective
where photos appear out of nowhere
with men sliding under closed doors
sliding slid by upright memoranda
proclaiming “rotten business for sale . . .
rotten location” and i sat with him
(the multimillionaire) in his formica
table-top convertible moon rocket
(the kind that reverses itself
like a super-mutant turtle
when it reaches the table’s edge)
but really it was only a company station wagon
but the multimillionaire was real
and ninety-three
and kept right on working
and wheeling
and stealing
(to promote his philanthropies)
and he pummeled the air with his fists
as ulysses simpson grant stared from both
his amber-verdant eyes
and cried out “well after all . . .
what does a young man want?”
and i softly answered “love”
and his mouth fell apart
and he fell back and died

EDWARD BUTSCHER

THREE THEORIES OF FIELD COMPOSITION

I

semanticism

I love seasons.

I love the season, the seasonal sway
of color and form,

not so much

for the tangible sap,
syrup-scented blood
in steel restraint,

though that has its sentient pleasures,
though that has its sensuous refrains,

harsh leather-brown bark being ripped
down into cameo snows by the satin
antlers of a spider

tumbling bones
like naked sinners

into summer's
rose-thorn flames,

plaster milk,
molten dust,
sudden air

sucked from heaven's luscious heaps
of gray upon gray bodies,

bouquet and bodice
of sullen ashes

untinctured by Italian psalms,
untouched by Italian palms,

salt embers
of a pollen
imperative

to flare flowers into resurrections,

autumn flocks exploding from global urns,
expressions, my love,

of seminal relief,

sun-banished lover arms

lipping seeds,
stitching stars

into languid rainbow
unions

consecrating all,
consuming night,

a moan of winter

not even for this, its fecund images:

stone toe and
rusty talon

for whatever velvet ideal
has survived childhood

diseases,

dreamy love murders and books,
of militant woes, wary worms,

easy
compound
allegories

of leafy youth and frosty age,
life and death phrases smoothing down symbol-gnarled
rivers, icon-stuffed corpses,
risen banks,
hanging trees,
mountain flights,
the suicide of gods

and their raucous idioms
of armored

rue, rue, rue,

twilight sighs,

breathing awake infant-pink dawns,
awkward strangers mouthing man's
seven stages,

lapping plows into spears,
chewing spears into chains,
complexes of cherry Christs
like paper lollipop parades, featherless
yarrow stalks
scratching
masks of dolor
in virgin
dust.

O

no

I love the steel reason outside it,
I love the machine gears inside it,
the pure idea of it,
the pure evil of it,
the pure good of it,
the absolute and
implacable wheel
of its coming
and its going,
the cold mind of its blind root senses
fumbling at alien leaf orders in the wind,
pawing black space vacuums into ovaries
with its silver limbs, tips, slipping
into an onion moon
with long potato eyes,
blasting tunnel eyes
in the soft-bodied coal
where ships break apart,
whales heave,
and leave their ribs
in luminous maps,
white traces
of an acid
art.

II

sentimentalism

See an old man, be more precise,
alligator skin like an ill-fitting shirt
(archaic, that), bunched at the neck,
spotted with baby lungs that wail at each
painful movement,

scrawny birch sapling leaping
in ostrich strokes between

the pair of ivory tusks, yellowed, honed
by the strop of a woman's tongue, frayed, I say,
apple-slicers from mother Eve's
fantasy factory.

See the tremble in his crowning hands,
vein impressions of barren boughs,
birdless and
black,
 perhaps,
 fleshed with ancient parchment designs,
 vague lands, seas, a lost Oriental kite
 (I like that

no end),
 filtered for smoking the charcoal
of his gnarled and knobby years
as they seek the earth peace of black woolen pants,
insanely wrinkled at the empty pouch and crotch,
nervously furrowing knots of fists
into remembered fights,
a forgotten artist
flayed bare
by fear.

See the eyes, jewels still (I demand it),
cloudy though, glass stoppers
for the acid pain within,
obtuse, too, yes, but not obsolete,
romantic as all hell in there, turfs

of lifeless, colorless grass, a frozen field
of knives, you fools, my skeletal lovelies,
walking me into summer fires,
cast adrift,

actually, atop a flaking skull
in an empty village,
cannibal-glad,
cannibal-gleam,
cannibal-sharp
as Gibraltar's bird-beaked gates,
snowed by the cold
ways of the world
into the silence
of not thinking:
wanting only the stripping sun
to bend, to kneel, to kiss
his once-candied lips
into a moan of contentment,
furry as a purr
below raw shouts,
more studied songs,
slippery
as the sibilant salvation
of the fatal
womb,
its night-still
pivot,

bud

of a husked
grasshopper humming
batteries
of shit flies
shafting
mama.

III

serpentism

Survival, my love.
Sucking on the stem
of a simulated rose,
 I breathe it in,
 swallow its flames
one by one
 to become a diamond snake
 pattern governing dawn's
naked thigh stars,
selfishly seeking
 a moment's stone cellar,
 darkness and felt life,
wet bodies and
long legs wrapping their icy grave joy
around my bags of sadness.
Petals, white,
white as fleece,
white as fleeced bones,
white as water-lily beds,
white as fresh hospital sheets
for the brutally murdered moles,
mangled in their mother's black hole
by a playful priest
and his pious
tongues.
Shed a tear.
Release the rosary
of bubble mendacities
until my dead-man lips
can moan and swell around
their amino acid seas.

Vines, too,
ripped from a theatre
balcony, fragments of rope ladders
now deader than sticks, pieces of stale tail
to braid into a cable noose
for every feat her
legend that ever
tickled art's
bright fancy.

Sleep and sift gold-tooth smiles
from the swan-soft ashes,
if you must,
an elegant finger bone,
scholar lean,
and its Japanese ring,
bell and candle, then,
curled around my book's
blackest similes.

Autumn comes in.
Autumn comes in bleeding,
an abstract splash
of senseless
scarlet/
rags
like flags,
like napkin flags.

Simpering sycophant of natural phenomena
(to my friends), I murder no less
the milk in my refrigerator chest,
the meat in my mortal mind,
still ripe
and hot
with expectations of another winter feast.

OLGA CABRAL KURTZ

5 & DIME

They were visitors to penny arcadias.
They were people lost in subways.
They were the poor seeking Layaway Plans.
They were trapped in the hanging gardens
of the giant 5 & Dime.

They were smelling the plastic flowers.
They were reveling in mothproof forests.
They were dazzled by bloodless blossoms:
kodachrome fuchsias, whiter-than-whites,
deadly reds, cryogenic blues.

There were angels guarding the exits
in frightwigs. Bibles grew wild
and abundant as shrunken heads.
In and out of the tropical houseplants
birds flew around in straitjackets.

The Queen of Sheba sold them corn-cures
when they tired. They sat on the plastic grass.
Picked plastic fruit from the plastic trees
and admired how dewdrops hung motionless
around the clock and season.

Was it heaven? Was it hell? It was wrinkle-proof
and guaranteed not to bleed. It wasn't real
but nobody minded. They were prisoners
trapped in the nervous breakdown
of the American Dream.

AN OLD MAN IN CAMDEN

On the ghost ship of the Brooklyn Ferry
an old man crosses the river
to the far shores of wallpaper
and the December seagulls
filling the room with wingspread
circle his head
intoning
his name's single syllable:

Walt! —

Walt! Walt! Walt!

Walt Whitman no longer thirty-six years
sweet and negligent flesh cleanly joined
but an old man dying
old man come in his sad sick body
to make the last crossing of the Brooklyn Ferry.

Walt! Walt! Walt!

Bird voices in tragic
and rusty chorus —
he shudders at what they know.

The huge birds hover
eyes cold as arctic
wastes but red
red as foundry fires in the night
or as the twenty-five thousand settings
of the sun.

Scavengers
grave robbers
cruel grosbeaks
they have come to see him off.

He is adrift on a vast
oceanic hoard
of paper:
whitecaps, squalls, old packets
of hurricanes
the high seas of his poems.
Words! words! words! words!
Powerful as breakers
boundless
beyond wallpaper horizons
and he is Oceanus of this realm
this kingdom of vast swells.

Lone passenger:
an empty
ferryboat.
Who calls him by his highest name?
Walt! Walt! Walt! Walt!
(Neptune, god of dark undertows.)
There is salt in his beard.
Alone in his room
an old man weeping.

Words! words! words! words!
He has crossed the great ocean:
his endless poem
that will beat and pound
at all the shores and continents of the world.

VINNIE-MARIE D'AMBROSIO

THE STORE AT THE BACK OF HER GARDEN

Green vines
like lakewaves in summer
whisper in breadth
rustle in height
on three storeys
of scarred brick
at her garden's southern edge.
Lights seem to whistle on the soft wall
as they ripple
down to her plants
sinking with dusty tomatoes.

She thinks how odd
that years ago
behind the vines
(*profound vines*)
an old man ran a flowershop
like a lion-tamer.
Bursts
of orchids and elephants' ears
she remembers
stood whipped and chopped and bleeding
in cardboard jugs.
But purple trumpets lie there now
row on row
dark and efflorescent —
mysterious stoppered bottles
filled with deep wines.
Labels
float above the shelves
blossoming in the dimness.
A doberman pinscher
glides through the awning-shaded indoor air
like a water moccasin.

GAZE

(to E. V.)

What brown are your eyes,
these sweet polished chestnuts?
Are they the dimness
in my grandmother's house?
The wood of her bed,
her shadowy primness and russet lace?
The hermit piano in the corner
with its shell drawn tight?
The dark coffee vortices
swirling hollow cells?
No twilight wine swims brown as your gaze.
My mind rolls down hills like a hoop in a wind.

OPUS

(to A.P.)

I thought one day we'd
build a mound
of scarlet leaves
ten horses high

like a merry church

and near it plant
a window-glass
filled with faces
of Sharon-roses

back of which
on autumn mornings
I'd till an oven
for mushrooming
loaves
or prune a summer
chifferebe
or irrigate
the works
of an English clock

and you'd warm a cloud
of sheep with crumbs
scooped
from apples
or comb a bush
of early snow
for syrup
and arias of cardinals:

the mass —
red flowers red fruit red sugar red song —
has focused so long
in this burning-glass.

ON THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF BLUMA SACH'S DEATH

Who knew her —
(God, all refused her!)
the Polish refugee,
caught seven times
in the Jew net?

Old
and fat
and poor.

Halls of applause
rattling
in a patched brain.

At last we met
and I wanted her
inside my door.

She came.
I poured the vermouth
of old sunrises
and said, *Borrow my piano
in the mornings, Bluma.*

And her arms flew,
and golden raisins
gleamed at the elbow,
and her dying skin
was heaving dough.

Done, shoulders damp,
she'd talk
beneath the parrots and swans
in the Roman garden
painted on my wall.

Wild Schumann huddled
beneath mute feathers,
ghastly parades
of brothers and children
kissed with soft beaks,
and I always said,
Tell me more!

Once the pain pushed
her to draw a line:
It is not fine of you,
she said.
We stared at wine,
and spoke no more of Poland.

In Warsaw's winter, once
she bartered, she the ripe artist
bartered her piano
for a shredding quilt.
My guilt is worse.
I handed her a sieve of hours,
and as return
peered under old leaves
at the haunted bird.

I will go into
 the small black room
where my work lies scattered
and the letters on the keys
are trembling fires
and the linoleum
is a rag of ice
under my penitent feet.

But Bluma, those mornings —
how the bright rooms laughed with music
while we wept!

RICHARD DAVIDSON

DEATH OF A POET

(Remembering Hart Crane)

I

He came and went and there was no reply.
Only the sea said things aloud.
Only the scorch of ocean dropping tea leaves in a glass.
There was the rim of sun; there was the long boat and
the crack of sky.
There were the whispers in his ear; there were the voices
of padded critics with empty pens
There was the giant bridge that held his soul; there was the
folk song of his body deep in the steel of his city.
He came and went and there was no reply.

II

What thoughts flung themselves on the hard crusts of wave?
What dreams swam in the pits of rock?
He disturbed the night with a final call
The stars distressed at the sight of death.
Back to the safe womb; back to the hard beaches of first dawn,
Off the deck of a slippery ship
Off the main street of a shrunken town
He waved one soft goodbye and the room of living was emptied.

III

He saw America as a giant bridge
Touched her buildings with the finger-tips of hands
Lost in the blood of experience.
His wounds were always exhibited.
His mind resting on the printed page.
The glories of the unknown dark filled the cellars of his brain
So he moved quickly and loved too well
So he held his breath against the shouts of spring
So he died yearning in his thirty-third year,
Misunderstood by the stiff halls of literary debate
Hounded by the wolves of doubt
A cry of stubborn life in the morning of death.

IV

Now remember him for he wrote the songs
The lost dream of America piercing his sky,
The sense of living flesh; the acres of raw earth
Clasping the hand of his memory.
The vision of thundering futures; land of Whitman and peace
Tearing before his eyes; spreading their messages of hope
On flagstones of wind.
He walked the deck of a foreign ship
Slid beneath the foreign waters,
Killed by indifferent firesides at home,
Killed by empty mouths and roaring tongues.
He came and went and there was no reply.
Only the sea said things aloud.
Only the scorch of ocean dropping tea leaves in a glass.
Only the vision left strong and singing
Before his dying eyes.

PORTRAIT ONE

I

She moves in the vacancy of lighted rooms
A shield of hostility burning the grass
Immovable thoughts behind the strain of eyes
The covering of empty childhoods screaming at the moon.
She hides well the coming feelings
That blossom in her throat like ruptured seeds
That fill the skies of her life as unwanted children
Pushing at pushing doors.
She hides well but not well enough
The need for additional agony
That turns her body into a quivering mesa
Of accepting stone.
She hides well but not well enough
The years of parched beds singing in useless sex
The flesh of together flesh ending in smells
And needless competition.
She hides well but not well enough
The long search for love and genuine reward.

II

Do not judge the judged for they have judged
Themselves and found life guilty.
She runs toward punishment like an unwashed sea
And holds her hands in ridicule against the smoke of faces.
She tears her dreams like sheets of paper
Clutching emotional straws that draw neurotic fire.
She traps herself and then yells *Trap!*
She cries beauty and then destroys that beauty
By crying too loudly or not crying at all.
She throws a shadow against the snow
And begs for imaginary entrances
To a thousand imaginary halls.
Do not judge the judged for they have judged
themselves and found life guilty.

III

She moves in the vacancy of lighted rooms
A shield of hostility burning the grass
Immovable thoughts behind the strain of eyes.
In the night the yells from unfrocked nerves
In the night the terror from distant hills
That shock her brain and destroy the sheltering city.
Is this the golden promise of tomorrow's harvests
That rock her withered stand?
The promise born beneath placid stars
The promise blended on parental sheets
That turn to adult misery.
Do not judge the judged for she has judged
Herself and found life guilty.
Push back. Push back the killing dream
And set her free
In the shining hours of a yet unquiet life
Of a yet unburied name.

JOSEPH DRUCKER

CHILD

My crippled flesh is with the child mating
with space in the eye of the sun.
He obeys what his interiors command of self, to be always
himself, of all things first everywhere in my embrace.

Light quickens over us like a swarm of bees as we leave
the statue's rotunda, gather blue phlox, marigolds,
sweet williams.
He at once moves away, joins the rumped dancers in pirouettes
of *pas-de-deux*
dips and bends in leaping flames of birth.
He disperses residuums of blocked and rigid molds
to purify the spirit.
He invokes fabrics of rare breath in stones, in myth-rituals
as old, as ever new, in a triumph of passion in a calm
and golden season.

In the growing dust, he has undergone a change.
He leans down witheredly on burdens of space
and attempts to sing.
His breath is caught short.
Is he about to faint?

Why, in God's name, does his heart pound so?
As if disembodied, he says: "The nature of the aesthetic
fashions the only morality, the only truth, left in our
farewell world: poetry. Poetry as love and being. Poetry
throbbing in a timeless time, full-panoplied in mercies of space."

He is father only to me.
He sings the imperishable in my soul.

BROTHER

A music as in a prelude to my flesh is the slow
movement that is his presence.

He is weightless fibre now, undrossed in softness
of perception, all-embracing as the rounded sun.
He never strays too far from me, floats off in circles
about my body, rides the shoals in my storms, sustains
me with his breath.

He is that part of me that reaches out into tender
ellipses of the moment in space, a widened curve
in the moon's grace, largesse in the future of meaning,
a reversal of total darkness, zero's converse, never
the mausoleum of dust-to-be in thoughts and memories
rising out of them.

He is the tree of regenerated landscapes.

He is the seed in stone that throbs a nascent green.

He is the pliable lap, a shield against impinging fears.

He quickens into flame a wisdom in the obsessive heart.

He is the perennial purveyor of warmth and love,
fructifying the shadowed corners with flowers.

He is the everywhere in infinity.

He is my dead brother who fell into my arms, alive.

ELAINE EDELMAN

HOW BEAUTIFUL YOU ARE: 3

By love was my eye opened
so wide I drowned in light . . .

Then blue seaflowers came and filled me
and apple, quince and pear (those heavy blossoms),
and pale snowflowers, splinters of jade and coral
cut from the bottom, the heart of the world.
For I had looked through the skin of a man's frail life
as through his hand,
looked past his pain and his desire, as past my own,
and glimpsed the brightness behind, the wandering song:
stared down through our earth's tin crust to the face of the sun.
And gazed at the sun's face hot in the center there
so long, so straight, my gaze was blackened.

Now the pity lies open —
pity for myself and for the others
human, brave, who know the wish to live
flowers so, only in love,
and love itself that grave
our roots must fumble open,
our loving open and live in.

We are the human beautiful,
who walk on water.
Striding the world-flood, disaster,
knowing well that we too carry it
lurching within our own lives —

and yet we come
cold with the bluefire breathing of the sea
to moisten the roots of all that has grown.

Blind, strange, singing . . .
singing like miners under the heavy hill,
we carry ourselves for candles.

ROBERTOH FABER

ESPALIERS

Have you seen, in European gardens
fruit trees against a wall
grown into a military shape
standing at Prussian attention
neat right-angled and two-dimension flat
as though some blast had stung them there,
years ago

Limbs emerging at
unsymmetrical unofficial
places long ago
trimmed off and the
remaining ones out-
stretched to be
slipped into their mittens,
bent at the elbows and
pegged into grid-place —
In their sheltered garden
well-cared-for and receiving
the maximum amount of sunshine;
free of weeds and grubs and getting
controlled and proper amounts of moisture,
soil periodically loosened, fertilized
and properly mulched for the
greatest production of fruit

Why are they not free, said the puzzled wind
outside the garden wall
consenting to be dwarfs for
fruit for whose sake?
has not a tree the right
to its own waving growth?
why said the wind are they not only
slaves but crucified?

THE FAT CATS HAVE ALWAYS

the fat cats have always
in their own way
been Dionysian
cautioning Apollonianism
to the middle classes
cautioning
the middle way to the middle classes
while as Veblen points out
those at the top and bottom
emulate each other
in non-moderate behavior
while the middles label the bottom psychopaths
but slavishly reverence the uppers.
After all, they've got to resent somebody,
don't they, for their self-chosen walking-death?

he whom they thought a fool
was the leader of the revolution
treachery they cried but no
the treachery was yours and did you not say
Imitate Us?

HE IS BITING HIS OWN HEEL?

He is biting his own heel?
Yes he has become
the bitch goddess
the subliminal snake
biting his own heel
the only change he knows is
 Westminster chime
accurately repeated on the hour,
 he thinks “authentically”
 but authenticity he has not
at a prime velocity of
 10,000 Coltranes we will play whole endless
 shifting auroras of new notes
 and combinations endlessly, endlessly

MARK FISHBEIN

THE MARTYR

A butterfly, hurled from its dark forest
where cocoons eat of the apple's fire
passed the eye-fast that was mine,
swimming in the mirror of this city
I am part of, this broken bottleshop.

It touched me and froze my spine
with wings as a ribbon of sun,
posed in delicate prayer and vow;
guided by a ghost it took to the traffic
and surrendered, beaten, to a bullet raging truck.

That night there was no moon, no clouds,
the empty black boulevard was cold
with winds strong from a stowaway depth.
A machete-terror bound me like a willow dome,
a womb which felt no wings redden its walls.

DOLORES GILES

IRREGULAR LYRIC IN RE FEAR

As a child, Fear — nearly did me in.
Everyone and everything
so tall . . . so threatening . . . so — *all!*

Then came the Kaleidoscope years
when hope with its cute utopian mirages
held me so high — that, any brief low
never caught me below
the 90th floor.

Ah, but now, when I've lost more than
a bit, of my greenhouse crispness . . . and
hope seems to have left me — permanently
Fear, Fear — once more — *looms* LARGE.

(Somehow, time never got around to handing me
any of his defenses, but it is possible he
doesn't issue them to everyone: "Oh, Fear, if
you only could melt calories!")

Just so as Fear can numb me
it also makes terrible excursions into the
arena of my bowels; they become spastic and
treacherous: disgrace hangs by a nylon thread
looped casually around my colon.
Fear is also — the sudden, swift source of
that emergent lake, which presses
so alarmingly
on — my vulva.

If love taketh away all Fears
could just *one* person's love . . . do it?
Shall I investigate commune living, loving?
Are fat and fifty explorers tolerated fully
or briefly . . . or just — never?

You, out there, I beg you — *please*
never fear the commitment of warm
kisses, well-timed; the cooling of
a hot tear ... the calming of the
providential embrace: *commitments are*
for burning ... and did you know, not
all burns leave scars? With a *good* love
you've got a living graft. Don't you secretly love saying,
"I gave" ... have I talked you into anything a casualty of
Fear, could swim to ... ?

I DON'T APOLOGIZE

Only a washed-up, tired-blood woman could
cooly sip Postum as Billy Eckstine, purrs
salty /sultry through — "Blues You're the Mother
of Sin" . . . 3:54 seconds of smokey meanness!

Worse yet, it's a far-gone, long-departed woman
who listens to 16:51 seconds of Billy Eckstine
over arid over again, without lighting one
cigarette . . . or (restlessly) toy with ice
cubes — in a sinful measure of growler-rushing gin.

Only thing keeping that woman
glued together is that she thinks
'She' — holds Billy captive, anytime
she puts that needle in that groove.

ANDREW GLAZE

MAKING COUNTRY

What a grand job that was,
making country!
Two weeks
on the peaks and steeps of mountains,
and holes and runnels,
dressed at the tips
with feathers of copses.

Remembering, with oceans, the trick
is to fill them exactly to the brim
and line them with beaches
in neat verges.
Rake out the sand like a white unreeling,
and tick a picket of palm trees
here and there along the edges
like brushes.

Afterwards,
devoting the hours of a couple of days
to broadcasting deserts,
powdering the sand between wastes of boulders.

Walking off by moonlight later
scouring the channels of rivers,
scattering streams among hills.
They glow in the dark
like silver lines on a map!

Then hanging it up overhead
(it shines like a jewel)
giving a twist,
getting it steady-heartedly moving about.
its own individual speed.
(that takes a most delicate hand).
Then stand off —
look at it there!
Violet, green and coral.
spinning like a world!

ROBERTA GOULD

IN MEMORY OF MARIANNE MOORE

(February, 1972)

I.

The slow snow
on the same street
as night falls
falls as flakes
of dandruff
purple in glare
of street lamp
harsh in phlorescence
and fact.

II.

This is where
she must have sat
to gather up her nerve
to sing alone
as the mad might
on songless days
of suicide
when crawling hatred circled home
the war at last begun

III.

Elegant, sophisticated, deft,
cool and noble in gift
yet this to serve
when living claimed its voice
as others set the tone
(fashion, diversion)
with hieratic sneers
and smiling fiddle
in the arrogant name of art

IV.

City of hatred
city of the free
who'll damage all
the lack of stars allows
lay her cold frame to rest
beneath the streets
and drive along
to pleasure, food and fun
The times are prosperous
if you are rich
the day's a good one
if you frame your feet
and never look beyond
or linger on
the past or unseen land
your brothers bomb

V.

She was finally weary
and useless as always
in all but fire and spirit
which last beyond the crumbling
of these towers
growled prayers go forth from
up their piece of sky

ANOTHER POEM, ANOTHER CHILD, DIED BY BURNING

(Nugen Son Doc, 1959-1969)

When devils rule you aflame pray
for a future in unborn eyes
where living you'd love unfettered
and sing what now you say

your body wanes and the ash
crumbles to the cursed ground
a thoughtless lull pervades the day
no eyes spark, no teeth gnash

and a hot breeze scatters you
as if defeated by loss
of body and a house to lay
your image in, the one time drew

with indifferent finger, as I
watched the fire you wore
consume your flesh to slay
the angel that would not die

**EIGHTH AVENUE ACT,
or THE MOUSE
IN THE LIQUOR STORE WINDOW**

Dream nosed, sniffing at the wine
stacked in the West Side window,
I caught his tiny eye and with my thumb
led him, as a star, across the glass.

He followed fixed, then as a biped rose,
tried to get firm hold of one thin bottle,
transparent tower he would climb erect —
that dazzling circus performer.

And he explored his city, sealed and set,
beneath the store front spot light — what an act!
that mythic mouse I gazed in wonder at,
transfixed until the corner clock struck twelve.

JOHN GUENTHER

FELINE

And you, Feline, are God knows where,
Slinking about with a cat's stare,
Loose on Lex, thirsty on Third,
Cadging drinks for a dirty ward,
Tagged on Second, out on First,
And never stopping to count the cost
As long as the song and dancing last.

I saw you go, I tried to say
Others before you went this way,
Sick for love and the counterfeit
Hands and voices offering it;
But you wouldn't listen to such as I,
Forcing a smile, waving goodbye —
Not while you live, not if you die.

Prowling the shiny city street
As the lights go up on another night
And Daly's Dandelion glows,
You bloom out there like a winter rose,
Burning white in the evening air.
Never mind how you found this place.
You stalk the room with a catlike pace,
Table to table, chair to chair.
The eyes follow your burning hair,
Brushed back from a pale white face,
A hurt mouth and a cat's grace,
And other strangers find you fair.
I wish you well and give you peace —
Not that I miss you, not that I care.

TRUE NORTH

I never thought you were south.
I could tell by your mouth,
Too taut, unsmiling
For easy beguiling.

Perhaps, I said, you were east,
Strange with the taste
Of salt air from the sea
When you came to me,
But how could I hold you fast
When you would not rest?

No, you were gone,
Lost again, and then,
Alone once more at last,
I thought you were west —
A strong wind, and cold,
That used to blow, when I was a boy
Over Indiana, across Illinois,
Where I sat by the firelight
In the winter night.

But you were none of these,
Soft south, strange east, cold west.
North suits you best.
Woman with a child's face and body,
Young, enchanting, not imperious, proud,
And constant, never-failing —
Pole-star to travelers, beacon in the dark,
Be my luck.
My compass is your face.
When you go forth
The needle swings true north.

HANNELORE HAHN

DISORDERED MAGNET

There's a lodestone
Deep inside
Me
Which registers directions
Wrong
Fools me
And leads me
Astray.

I wanted to go
South
But was pulled
North
Which I thought I had left.

Again I'm snowed
Again my heart freezes
And I was so sure
I was heading for the
Thaw.

Disordered planet
Heading for the
Freeze
Shooting off-course
Solong.

THE TIME OF YOU

The time of you was long ago,
When I thought every creak on the stair was you.
And it was.

The time of not you is now,
When I think every creak on the stair is only
 old wood growing older.
And it is.

RONALD HOBBS

LAMA POEM

(Sangre de Christo Mountain Love Song)

In front of your little house
where you can stand and watch the blood of Christ
pour upon the mountains of his blood's name
there is a memory of a night
we hurled our hammers at the sky
And threw our arms about the moon, and each other.

What to do but appraise eyes,
disappear into the sphere of oval candle
and re-emerge lovers?

Some night soon, when the world is rock still —
when there is not even the tinkling of a glass —
when the last echo of the last laughter of the last joke
totally unwinds and drifts like a web onto the night snow
— when stars are shy girls dropping their light through space
you might see a form, a naked ghost,
pilfering beer cans and cow bones.

There's no guessing just how you will see it.
Surely you will not see him as clearly
as the huge women who recline in blankets
about your horizons and sleep now as cold as ice.

In summer no one is surprised
when they lean up on sunset elbows
to look into the desert mirror
and later, in moonlight, dance.
Now they will not even notice
as you inspect the snow while peeing;
as you pause in awe of night's orange trees
and wonder at the something that is not quite there
but is — like the Kiowa spirits, or the
summer rain that falls on Ute Mountain.

REMBERT HERBERT

I COME WITH THE LAUNDRY

I come with the laundry, having
just ruined your favorite blouse
by washing it with orange sheets.
I pulled the neatly folded load
up a long hill in a two-wheeled cart.
Halfway up, a wet cardboard box
full of chicken necks lay on the sidewalk
unattended but by the flies.

Lying on a bare mattress
you are staring at one of its buttons.
“Well, it doesn’t matter;
Throw the blouse away.”
I am coming up the hill
pulling the flawed wash.
“What are you thinking?
You never tell me, you never tell me.”
You turn away, I never tell you, turn
tightly away, your face to the wall.
I see myself out the window
pulling the flawed wash up a hill.

BARBARA A. HOLLAND

STORM WARNING

The nature of brick:
its texture may be extracted
from brick and applied
to anything else,

leaving what? The answer
awaits in a bowler hat, which dominates
a cluster of clouds
skimming the rigidity of collar.

Question no mysteries.
In their own time
they will move in with you,

Then a waterfall will hang
as a curtain to your shower.

If you slip through behind it,
one twist of either
hot or cold will liberate
a thousand jets of sand.

And it may be tomorrow.

A CUP OF COFFEE

When you lift the sash
of your window, up goes
wherever you are behind the upper one,
and it remains there, writhing
with apple boughs, galloping
with a headlong meadow nowhere,
while being its usual self in motion,

but outside and underneath, my present
situation spies on you.

Fire-escapes scuttle
under a roofing of heavily drifted
snow, climb into tree tops,
or harass the base of a village spire,

and you sip your coffee, not yet
willing to recognize the texture
of the wind that cools it,

staring at what you expect to see,
which actually rattles
above your head, trapped between two
sheets of glass like the twin
fake lenses composed of the business
of ants that were framed
into spectacles for Salvador Dali.

Then, when you slam your window shut,
the meadow and orchard
telescope into your recent
illusion, driving both it and mine
to their customary distances,

and once again the fire-escapes
threaten my neighbors' windows.

SO THERE, DESCARTES!

I have had all the time
in the universe to examine that table,

the rug,

the chair,

and still I am not
convinced of his departure.

But he has disappeared. He took his feet
away when lie removed
his head, shirt, tie and coat;
everything he was
above the table.

Maybe
he left his feet in front
of the door to his top floor room.

I shall waste
no time in climbing
all those stairs
to see.
He should be behind
that unrefurnished cup. An obstinate
fold of his overcoat
laps down darkly

at the side of his chair.

I would never allow myself
to interfere with the reveries
of a secret agent,
who could be
the muse. The saboteur, subversive
and obvious as always!

ELEGY FOR ALEXIS

What sort of wind, Alexis,
covets your house? What kind of claw
slips over balustrade and grabs your guest,
leaving the slender ledge a legacy of gusts,
that tell the searching host no tales of sills below,
counting down twenty stories through the death blue haze
to asphalt and the smash that ends all stories.

What sort of wind, Alexis,
wept within your rooms and wiped
the stars from all the windows on the night-hung edge
above the senseless reeling of the universe,
that filled all space with panic force
and swept you over, bowled bar-bell
brace of door block from its lock on life
and drove the hoofs of stallions through your loneliness?

What sort of wind, Alexis, breeds within
the ear that listens for you and behind the eye
squinting up height of wedge at fork of avenues
to last brink of mortality, that climbs beyond
the indecisive glide of paper scraps on thermals swirled
past your last floor on earth to where you are?

What sort of wind, Alexis, urges us
to seek you as you once had sought, to know
only the thin line of the parapet where dust
is rushed in endless search of self
where there is none?

KRISHNA IN THE AFTERNOON

One of my many selves
sits on the grass with the children,
driven by wonder at the marvels
that come through our eyes
to sing in the chapels of our heads.

Where the two brows come together,
perched beyond bridge of the nose as a bird,
Krishna alights and the sun on the cymbals
bursts with him on the darkness
we have yet to break.

Suddenly wind rises. The finger cymbals
are stilled. I am another self
with a workday tomorrow and today,
as the death of my incense,
grown down to the burning of my hand.

ROBERT KRAMER

AS MY DAUGHTER SCREAMED IN THE NIGHT

From my pre-dawn dream
I was awakened
by a sudden scream from hers.
First fragment from without,
intruding into my
nocturnal world of sleep;
then I heard the final note
awake, still piercing from her bedroom,
stumbled through the darkness
(toenail scraping chairs)
to her bedside,
felt her body taut and trembling.
I reassured with words banal,
and clasped her hands in mine.
Her fists, so tightly clenched,
relaxed, her heaving chest grew calm.
She, still half-asleep,
said, "Good-night, Daddy."
I smiled in darkness, hoped
she'd passed the worst of nightmare —
and returned to mine.

LIKE THE SEVERED HEAD STARING

Like the severed head staring
at its languid trunk
beneath the guillotine,
into the mirror you peer
and see but the face of a clock.
Chatter futilely
like a wasp in a jug, await
the invisible leeches of time
to lock with the night;
blink, avert your eyes
beneath the cool gaze
of the clock —
with the hermetic terror
of the fevered child
locked in his nightmare.

AFTER-LOVE SONG

Once souls and bodies close
as lid and turning eye,
our lines of love ran skew;
and then the process of forgetting
like the gradual fading
of a bad photograph.

Now in utter silence
listen to the sounds
of your sole companion
as he eats.

While the ancient parrot
sates his avian lust
on mirror image,
not yet attained
the sterile land
of resignation.

ANN KREGAL

TO AN OLD MAN DYING OF AGE LOSING HIS MEMORY

call back

from that passageway
of black and glowing crystal
where the light of midnights
brighter than the noon a
vestibule radiating outward
to enter vistas smaller
than a seed; closing inward onto
valleys larger than the sea

call

back while what's called 'knowing'
remains with you this evanescent
instant even while your private
infinity of incidents circumvent
beyond themselves as you yourself
must go — beyond yourself

all incidents being incidental in
themselves, their essence only
joining the gigantic memory, so
now to lose their superfluities;
the place in time of
certain boat calls, certain
gull cries, a whispered
phrase . . .

then lose them,
justifiably so for they are
swollen, pregnant with a greater
import than could be known in
knowing them

losing them
then quickly, quick now before
you too must leave from that
passageway of black and
glowing
crystal, the light of midnight
brighter than the noon
call
call back
so

FOR J.H., WHO ESCAPED GENOCIDE, 1940

you escaped to England
and they left soon for Auschwitz

yet before the Nazis entered
Holland you reached your friends'
house from Vienna and in the early
morning only you awake, watched milk-
men leave the milk at courtyard
gates and the flowerman
leave tulips

IN OUR ENCLAVE

in our enclave we taste minutes

(hear rumbles on the roof?,
... the sky is falling)

exquisite in their simplicity

(hear the trampling feet)

enwrapped in each other and still-
ness (roaring surrounds us)

could we draw clo-
ser and closer
to disappear
forev-
er
?

DONALD LEV

WEALTH

hoard of gold
dragon cold eyed
breathing flames of ice
that flesh melts ice
which retains the fire
that first spat up the dust
that mothered and fathered adam
spear covered with rust
lay by helmeted skull
where beowulf battled his last
settlers have builded a wall
against which kids and loafers pitch nickels —
and poets scratch in charcoal
words to baffle daniel

if i were rich
I'd be rain
to fall upon
each thing i have loved in vain

TROUT

i bit the lavender feathered hook
it hurt, not going down, but after
But i was going up, and wanted to
Even past the gill-line, i wanted to
Seeing the sky in and out of the clean green woods clear as
my brook —
and my hue in a rainbow

VINCIT VENDITOR

joy to the world
herald of the
new day to come
approaches
greet him
he launches
a whole new order
he ushers in a
new spring
he
also sells shoelaces

WILLIAM J. MATTHEWS

I SEE A BOY SOMEWHERE

I see a boy somewhere
arise naked

from the steaming pond of evening,
shivering in the cold sun
as beads of darkness
evaporate from his flesh —

Pale body tightened, tense,
sunlight flashing

along wet loins and chest, he lifts
his arms in silent supplication,
stares into the sun,
& sublimates into a clear mist

D. H. MELHEM

AFTER DINNER

when that taxi pulled off
when it lurched from your hand toward the
 white man ten feet away
when it left you standing foot off the curb in a puddle with
 the rain down hard
my just-eaten chow mein dinner lumped under my heart
and I stood under the restaurant awning hoping
 male chauvinist
or that the rain and the night were too thick for him to have
 noticed you on the illumined street
and I wanted to run to the corner armed
 with my umbrella
 to challenge him
 as he waited obeying the traffic light

and I waited

FULCRUM

there is a resolution turning all my thought
to act
as a kernel of wheat intending what is fed
and to the world of tables and temptations
I oppose this noise

it is camping outside stillness
it is a roaring touch that will not leave you
as it revolves its force and facets
to your cold eye

there is a revolution turning all my thought
to armies
to the worn and passive hand at last accepting
within its wrinkled pulse the metal chamber
poised upon
its turn

ACCIDENT

crossing the street, he glanced left
saw death his mother sitting in a truck
bore down on him
smashed face that flew forth
twenty feet to rest red in the eyes
light streaming from his brain

CALL THE POLICE

police are questioning their questions
 lying around the man

a lady gives a handkerchief

long after bearer and the stretcher-borne
facts like ghosts
harrow their ground
translate a man
to measurement
from bumper to blood puddle
equate the rate with
mass and distance of him

truth cools to mathematics
intern of the ambulance records
the patient waited thirty minutes
bled to death

COCKROACH: A TRIBUTE

having become accustomed to customs of
cockroaches
their patterns of retreat,
how they learn early
to free fall from walls when hands
approach
how they breed
in neat brown casings found
when empty
their swiftness and persistence, impervious
to sprays, even professional
extermination
dropped from the air
how patiently they wait in plumbing till the water
stops

Poison the drain:

yet
when I'm sleeping
they creep up
to sanctuary
in wallpaper
that cracked plaster
I avoid looking
at

JOHN BURNETT PAYNE

MISSOURI SUMMER, 1914

(For Juris Jurjevics)

Blue beyond the ridge in the blue Missouri sky
a boy's kite lives and soars
its tail multi-colored like any Missouri quilt;
from the chicken run
a noisy sentinel-playing guinea-hen *potracks*;
off, somewhere,
almost out of time,
gentle, elusive,
a rain-dove coos;
and grandpa knows
(it is the summer of 1914 in Missouri)
when the diamondback terrapin surfaces,
coming out of the clean-running creek
 for a little Missouri sun,
that the time is ripe,
now,
here,
for what he's been wanting and waiting to do,
putting off, dithering about,
the notion there all along,
his,
and he's been walking around his own compulsion,
 his own need,
delaying a good fourteen summers now;
and he reaches for his pocket-knife,
grateful for the tinker's whetstone,
the sharp edge,
workmanship,
thinking, well after the fact of the century's end

(it is the summer of 1914 in Missouri),
you need an edge on yourself,
tools,
history,
need to know who and where you are.
It isn't every summer afternoon
that a diamondback terrapin,
eventual record of history, time and consciousness,
climbs out of the creek for a little Missouri sun.
And grandpa grabs the terrapin,
ignoring kicking feet,
just grateful for the available terrapin,
ripe, conveniently at hand,
over-damp
from the slime and sludge of the fresh-running creek;
and grandpa carves his initials,
the summer date, a farm-place in Missouri,
incisively, on the back of the diamondback terrapin,
sorry he didn't do it fourteen years earlier,
when the shock of liberation and realization
were a little stronger.
He looks at his handiwork,
subdued, himself,
and the terrapin,
knowing that something is going on,
that something is happening, has,
ambles away and sinks back into the clear-running creek.
I've survived the nineteenth century,
leaving it in shambles behind me,
and I'm making it,
keeping a little ahead.
The diamondback terrapin
testifies for me.

Lucky, both of us,
to get out of the nineteenth century
our wits, faculties, good health intact.
Don't think that I could do it again,
live it out, survive, the way I did, if I had to:
those wars in foreign places,
unfriendly fighting beyond the ridge
where the blue kite dives and soars in the blue Missouri sky.
Grandpa thinks of Robert Fulton, Eli Whitney, Morse, Yankee
inventors too shrewd for their own good, the patent office;
and spits in the direction of his south forty
where the railroad runs,
remembering the day when freshly-laid track first cut
through his dancing cornfield;
another day, coming on all too quickly,
when freight-rates were more than he could pay;
a time when frontier towns, once full of hope,
turned into ghosts of themselves.
Here I am, and so much is gone, but not, perhaps enough.
Good riddance to bad rubbish, to bad times, to illusions
wilder and lonelier than the wilderness.
Where are the Indians?
The buffalo?
The railroads that wisely ran underground?
Where is the American dream?
The acres and acres of wild flowers, stretching farther
than the naked eye might see?
I like the pattern of the diamondback terrapin,
always have,
like it even better now,
bearing my initials, the summer's year, the farm-place name,
firmly carved
with a cleanly-honed pocket-knife.

Diamondback terrapin,
noble vessel,
sinking into the clear-running water of the creek,
marked for the duration of its life
with the consciousness and fact of mine,
both of us needing our own edge on history,
triggered by Missouri doubts,
deep-cutting, depth-intending,
putting fiascos, disasters, holocaust well behind
a boy's blue kite diving and soaring beyond the ridge
 in the blue Missouri sky
the contrapuntal sounds of a rain-dove and guinea-hen.

SABINA ROSEMAN

MAD MAGGIE

a painting by Breughel

what genius, that asks
a woman to be reasonable
mad maggie stretched mad
what but an armored
breastplate, daggered hand
to cross the bridge
past deformed trees
into deviled mote

wild in your extreme eye
who but a woman
would break
into devil's land
tear back what was
rightfully hers
mad maggie wounded angel
deviled to devil the devil

TO A HAMSTER

At its largest six inches of fur
domesticated for pleased bondage
two small eyes which looked past me
only a furred breathing toy
until the day the cat somehow
managed one long nail thru cage
piercing the small almost inept creature
the hamster removing itself to far corner
where patiently it took each small
piece of paper which was its nest
holding with delicate precision
curling each small pieced paper
into flowered petals
carefully placing each flower
forming a mound
setting itself into center
then quietly waiting the end

JANET SAGE

TO YOU

I find telephone numbers I have scratched
on odd pieces of paper, old postcards:
numbers without names, and I am tempted to call.
who will answer to this number?
a fool, a wise man, someone who wants me,
someone who won't?

perhaps even God may connect us across the unknown
wires of destiny, as we move, alone, together.

*May 10, 1969
New York City*

SUSAN SANDS

SEA CHANGE

He called me a mermaid, a creature of the oceans,
he hung iron weights on my hips
until I sank into his brain.

My graying tendons became fingers
of his prehensile thoughts. Extending
airborne, he oiled me with
slick of his conscience and I slipped
gratefully into his blood where
I grew strong again on salt
and turbulence.

If he ate my arms and legs, never mind,
I was a fat starfish
regenerate, I grew back.

I learned to prick him with sea spines
and destroy his armadas.

I raided his tide-pools like a hungry poacher.
And now he calls me parasite. He starves me,
shrinking his veins with metal
trying to expel me back to the air.

But I have grown too wise to listen to his names.
Rooted in his blood
I have grown
wet gills.

LAYLE SILBERT

MAD MONEY

They threw
bankbooks, checkbooks and accounts
(good paper, powerful watermarks,
ancient paper houses,
strong leather bindings).
With bursts of real income
they diverted money
which spurted over,
then hurled after
coins in rolls
that broke into showers
of silver on copper,
gold bars incognito
in counterfeit wraps,
wads of Tsarist rubles,
CNC, Chinese cash and postwar marks,
two-*sous* pieces from country museums,
and big money bags
exploding on contact.

The currency caught fire,
bloated the air,
spread to structures
over fences, walls and city boundaries,
provincial borders.

People in cellars
during bombardments of money
died of side effects
unknown in old wars.

How would you
like to be on the losing side
and get your skull cracked
by a brickbat
of gold bullion?

DENIS SIVACK

IN MEMORIAM: THOMAS MERTON (1915-1968)

You flew, dove in blue denim,
cross-water
to a mountain abbey
where all windows
look inward.
I hear of your death from a friend.
A fallen olive branch
ripples in Monk's Pond:
green and gold shadow-spill,
seen by the hermit's lantern,
outlasts the tower struck by lightning.
The power that killed you
shatters inward windows;
carries the death message to us
by hot wire —
we understand it
in the power out of which you lived.
In dark time we remember your words:

*Suppose the dead could crown their wit
with some intemperate exercise*

*Or if the wise could understand
And the world without heart
That the dead are not yet dead
And the living live apart¹*

¹Thomas Merton, "A Responsory, 1948."

You have gone eastward, home
where the sun does not set.
The olive branch defies concentric law
passes the ripple outward —
the lantern flickers:
 you touch us with tongue of flame
 and the pond becomes a Holy Fire.

CROWS AND SHADOWS TELL NO LIES

In death
the feet get cold first
taking leave of the body
like glass from windows
of an abandoned house.

The hands shed
their painted skin
letting the grass grow through.

You do not think these things
with your mind of winter,
time out of season of snows,
looking out at the broken fences
of lost fields.

As long as crows gather
covering the evening
with their darkling wings
the cherry trees will feel
their worth.

Tomorrow you will
put the late afternoon in baskets.
The wind will see you through.

The long growth watch lengthens.

Crows and shadows tell no lies
breaking the darkness to you.

THEY, WHO HAVE ASKED FOR NOTHING

I live in a room full of paper.
Because my eyes are sand

the fires cannot burn me.
I am defined

by portraits of medieval men,
wool-merchants and salters.

When I sleep your shirt
cuts into my skin.

When I look into the mirror
I see your stomach.

Though I cannot play guitar
I would build a harpsichord

upon a mountain;
would give you all I own:

the kettle of silverfish,
who have shared my life

in their comings and goings,
who have asked for nothing,

they, who have watched with me
for the first hours of tomorrow,

who have crawled from the Father of Lies
and have called his firstborn, Morning.

MANES KEEP TO THEIR PLACES

In the inner room
the alabaster lady waits

combing her long green hair.
Her fists are jaded with the scent

of lilac crush flowing through
yesterday's fingers.

Her eyes are the insides of shells
oyster gray looking into morning.

You cannot wait.
The day is turning

into stone.
From the far side of the garden

incensed birds are singing
of the growing of trees

filling with oranges.
You put a mango to your lips

breaking the juice vault of the sun.
The earth is moving

like a river at your feet.
Flowers shall grow in your hair.

ANALYST

I met you in your fear
out of a long time cowering;
spread to you laughter,
stolen from some dead self,
fathering, loving;
changing my faces
to change your taunted stare,
in animation there to make you see.
I was your needed rascal
at end of darkness —
until your play turned you.
You could wander the day away
from a fearsome self or faceless lover.
We were left roleless;
had only our naked selves to meet:
One meeting one where charm had fled.
Against untroubled you I was
cold somber and sober,
while you were a Janus-faced child of dream.

LEE STROTHERS

POSTCARD FROM DACHAU

The stream we crossed was hidden by reeds.
So narrow a blade of grass separates
 the compound from the shed,
 the living from the dead.

The entrance to Hades is through a shower stall.
Beyond are ovens, dark and cold.
The shades are but faded photographs,
their utterances scribblings in a book
 the outraged tourist writes —
 gaunt agony looks on.

I, Odysseus, sought a countryman,
one of the three-hundred, a Theban by birth,
to learn how long the sea parts me
from lands and home, woman and child.
 The crest and trough of a wave —
 birth and death of a man.

If one slays the black ram and ewe,
he may summon by the blood of his blade
all whom the Queen of Hell sends.
Although I've poured libations into this pit —
mead, wine, water, and scattered the corn,
the anemone alone reveals their blood.

Phantoms remain formless, the Seer mute.
I had expected to find my mother here,
the brooding warrior and murdered king,
 to talk of burning cities
 and destinies of men.

The phantoms have fled this accursed place
to flicker among the wine-dark dreams of drunkards.
A blade alone separates
 the compound from the shed —
 living from the dead.

SUMMER UNENDING

for Charles Devlin

In summer's hushed shimmer we sat
at the pond's edge watching the wood opposite
reflected — a unison of leaves.
Long drought bared the bank to baked clay
and the water grew turgid with bass and sunfish.
As fin or mouth broke the surface at a gnat
ripple upon ripple eroded the inverted unity.

You ask how a writer can use it.
The painter who owns this land must have learned
something.
See how he builds up his pigment like bricks.
Except for children who raise an unbaited trap
only to throw back what they catch by chance
he permits no one to fish his private domain.
Rod and reel lean together on the porch.

I accept with silence the grace of a small bird
tentative at the edge caught in reflection.
Something more than metaphor
beckons us beyond those leaf-points
breaking into ever-changing patterns
upon the shrinking pond's bronzed green patina.

THE BET

On the day Uncle Ralph died
the chambers in his house moaned
as the wind dusted the opaqued windows and halls
cluttered with the clippings and parings of his life:
his self-winding watch, timed by pulse or crap-shooting;
vial of pyrites, junked among his brass Chinese coins,
pinochle decks and Keno cards in the top bureau drawer;
and *Police Gazettes*, hoarded by date in the closet
witnessed the losses, failures, mortgages
ebbing away the vessel of his life
ruptured by a clot the size of a die
flooding his brain with an ocean of blood,
darkness and accumulated guilt.

And he, though often warning me
against the abalone vice in dark waters,
caught his own hand beneath the hard rock of his heart
before flickering out between station breaks
(Grandma clutching a can of beer, squinting
a commercialful, not daring to answer his call
from the last vacant room in the house), and he died —
sealed up against life chamber by chamber,
a nautilus circling its rose roulette,
reaching toward the outer rim of his horn,
drowning in the morning tide —
light shattering the casements of his eyes,
sound dredging the sand-clogged conches of his ears.

Or maybe it seemed he might yet surface at the light's
retreating, if only he'd out-swim the shark
hovering above the portal of his shell —
that is if he dared to bet on it
and he did.

P.K. VOLLMUTH

QUESTION FOR ANOTHER MOTHER

No, you are not my mother
Not pain blessed purveyor
Of that beam of blood
That pushed out impressing bondage
On one more not quite selfhood

Rather you are flint
Cognizant to almost kindled woodness
In hope that even splinters fly
And petrified to black agate
The tree shall be green-leafed

Mother not the one
Who having torn me
From a fleecy womb
In two days labor loving
And after sweat in twenty
Years of growth

Still could not explain
The why and how of man
In consummate patience
Failed to break my chains
Failed to reach me beyond
The quaking question
Why even in our beauty
We are contrary?

Mother, named just friend
Can you let me know
If i am even half a poem
Or only milkweed sparkle on the wind

Carpet this stone dungeon
Paced still within
Quiet monotone of sleep

Convince me that these words
Which build citadels of dubious distinction
Are worthy of the struggle thru a birth

You who learned to sing
Before my eyes distinguished
More than light and dark
Apprise me of the reason
That we burn

And if you can believe
That human is a little more
Than bits and pieces hung on racks of bone
Tell me why i'm still uneasy
As i stand out here alone.

ACTORS

We play whatever role is easiest
Erect structures no more than facade
Godlike, do not show a face

Thru masks, become as natural as skin
We peer in stark terror that a glance
Shoot past these exteriors

As actors, we must always spin
Networks of phantasy
Only to be spiders meshed
In our own webs
Stuck on misplaced hypocrisy

Then he is most convincing
In a sometime Hamlet suit
Every bit as i wear well
This Faust in drag

We are hungry tigers
In an eat-or-be-devoured farce
Cannibals, we wait for nakedness
The scent of flesh
Beneath a crack in costume

Until we are swallowed by illusion
Envision into looking glass
No familiar feature
Strangers even to ourselves
Wander in and exit
On a Maya stage called life.

PSYCHIC MASOCHISM

i am splintered on this bed of nails
Strung solemn, beat bizarre
In one odd, syllabic metre
i ought, must know
You touch me for most trivial of reasons

Yet i cling upon it,
Clutching bone to bone
Hand to hand in metaphysic combat
Protracting the intrigue
Till its weights be counterbalanced

You are supine upon your crucifix
Awaiting morning's resurrection
Glued into my meagerly-responding flesh
Into early stillness i know again
How i must leave
Forbid another rising to that
Angry bird of blood
That is such weakness in my womanhood

To sling me as one solitary feather
Blown here and there
Without guidance of a wing
(The hunter of the night will search
For some more proud pinion than i)
Because i cannot believe that the feast
You set before me
Is not some charismatic drug

That will splinter me upon this bed of nails
Leave my hard head scourged by wanton salt
In trader winds, struck solemn, beat bizarre
That i while somber champion of the dark
Still never wished the sun to fail

DICK WHIPPLE

TO SUZANNE FARRELL

There she dances —
The Muse in Tchaikovsky's head
Nijinsky's spiritual mate
Mocking gravity
Lightly guiding electrons through a love affair with beauty
Toes touching where she pleases,
Making forever ripples in the cosmos
Herself fitting between whorls of atoms
Light as moon-bound/free
Freeing the earth from its own weight
Dictating orbits of ethereal moment
As balanced she turns fingertips
To wed dimensions into unique spasms
That couldn't have been
But persist within the beholden
Soul-raised by immense powers
Unmarked but temptingly felt

Existence can't be ordinary ever
Again
As indeed now it never
Was.

CURSE THE CANDLES

With your rose on my snuff
And nine amassed-aligned stars on our side
Walpurgis Night wasn't all it should have been
And I'm beginning to question my own fantasies
About rubbing this there and grunging it
against a springy new icicle
Hateful prospect it is
To now doubt my own flower farts
And upend the whole rash business of gropehope itself
But this is where a poet says *but* and explains himself
And I can't sanity clause any more
The explanations are as dead as the best that was done
Were you frightened because I told you
 how nice I imagined it —
Or does the earth stop by free will?

EUNICE WOLFGRAM

WENDY

wendy was a werewolf, and this complicated her life because every month when it was full moon she couldn't make any money, and she resented the time taken from her, so she went to a dealer in herbs and asked him to give her something for her problem. he sold her some nice smelling blue herbs, and she went home and took them.

the next full moon she turned into a nun.

TWO

two was ritchie's number, two had won for him many times, both at the track and in the numbers game.

two was uncomplicated

and he never forgot like he did so many other things, two was always there for him always faithful, not like people.

on the second

day of the second month he put two dollars

on the number two horse

in the second race to win and the horse came in second.

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Commonweal

“In Memoriam: Thomas Merton,” Denis Sivack.

Dasein

“Trout,” Donald Lev.

Epos

“Manes Keep to Their Places,” Denis Sivack.

Folio

“Making Country,” Andrew Glaze.

Gyro

“Mad Maggie,” Sabina Roseman.

Hanging Loose

“How Beautiful You Are: 3,” Elaine Edelman.

Hyn Anthology

“Wendy,” Eunice Wolfgram.

Olga Cabral Kurtz

“5 & Dime” and “An Old Man in Camden,”

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“Gaze,” “Opus,” and “The Store at the Back of Her Garden,”

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Penumbra

“Elegy for Alexis,” Barbara A. Holland.

The Reconstructionist

“On the Fifth Anniversary of Bluma Sach’s Death,”
Vinnie-Marie D’Ambrosio.

Sanskaras

“To a Hamster,” Sabina Roseman.

The Small Pond

“Krishna in the Afternoon,” Barbara A. Holland.

ABOUT THE NEW YORK POETS' COOPERATIVE

Compiled from the notebooks of Barbara A. Holland, who scheduled all the group's readings in its early years, and from notes provided by Robert Kramer.

The membership of New York Poets' Cooperative varied as poets joined and departed. One list in Barbara A. Holland's notebook included 24 poets as members. Robert Kramer provided another members' list from 1974. The combined list is as follows:

Jacob Bush
Edward Butscher
Richard Davidson
Elaine Edelman
Mark Fishbein
Dolores Giles
Andrew Glaze
Roberta Gould
Hannelore Hahn
Rembert Herbert
Ronald Hobbs
Barbara A. Holland
Sabina Jacyna
Percy Johnston
Robert Kramer
Anne Kregal
Olga Cabral Kurtz
Donald Lev
Al Levine
David Levine
Diane Levenberg
William J. Matthews
D. H. Melhem
Claudia Menza
Patrick Merla
Stanley Nelson
Pasmanik, Wolf

John Burnett Payne
 Shirley Powell
 Janet Sage
 Layle Silbert
 Denis Sivad
 Miriam Solan
 Lee Strothers
 Karen Swenson
 P. K. Vollmuth
 Dick Whipple
 Ozzie Williams
 Irene Willis
 Eunice Wolfgram

The following is a partial list of poets who were featured at the weekly readings and other events sponsored by The New York Poets' Cooperative. Barbara Holland left reading schedules, and hand-written summary list of poets who had read between 1971 and 1974. Some names were added from several 1979 Poets' Cooperative programs held at the Donnell Library. Readers for the intervening years were not in sources available at press-time. Many of these names are transcribed from written notes, so spelling may be inaccurate for some.

Adamson, Eve	Cruff, Mary E.
Aprile, Joseph A.	Curran, Donald
Austeenmuhl, Ed	Cushen, Karen
Back, Karen	Czys, Irene Anne
Ball, Alan R.	D'Ambrosio, Vinnie Marie
Bandelspinner, Bettina	Darr, Ann
Bankes, Lynn	Davidson, Richard*
Barrow, Charles T.	DeFazio, Marjorie*
Bass, Madeline	DeSilva, Margot
Behrman, George*	Dragonette, Ree
Benig, Irving	Drucker, Joseph*
Bigelow, Lisa	Duberstein, Helen
Brady, Anne	Duplessis, Nancy
Brafman, Allen	Durso, Rick
Butscher, Edward	Edelman, Elaine
Calhoun, Peter	Elliott, Sara
Congdon, Kirby	Evans, Jephtha
Corbett, Dennis	Faber, RobertOh

Faredi, Judith
Ferrari, Mary*
Finnell, Marjorie E.
Fishbein, Mark
Fleisher, Berenice
Fox, Siv Cedering
Friedman, Dan
Gaess, Roger W.
Gagluilo, Gen
Garrison, Peggy
Gary, Claudia S.
Gay, Pamela D.
Gelman, Ron
Giles, Dolores*
Glasgow, Boruk*
Glassman, Paulette
Glaze, Andrew
Glen, Emilie*
Gold, Alan
Gould, Roberta
Greco, Emily*
Green, Donald
Green, John
Gual, Hannah
Guenther, John
Hanley, Anthony
Harris, Marguerite
Hayn, Annette*
Hecht, Roger
Herman, Melanie
Hershon, Robert
Hestis, Shah
Hobbs, Ronald
Hoffman, Jerry
Holland, Barbara A.*
Holman, Robert
Holst, Spencer*
Humphrey, James
Iverson, Lucille
Jarrett, Emmett
Johnston, Percy E.
Kaplan, Eleanor
Kearns, Richard

Klahr, Myra
Korn, Alfred
Kornberg, Martin
Kramer, Aaron
Kramer, Robert
Kregal, Ann
Krohn, Herbert
Kunstler, Frank
Kurtz, Olga Cabral
Larkin, Joan
Latta, Richard
Lawder, Donald
Lessing, Edward
Lev, Donald*
Levine, Al
Lillquist, Kenneth
Lindell, Doe
Livingston, Gary
Livingston, Patricia
Locke, Robin S.
Lorde, Audre
Lowenfels, Walter
MacDonald, Cynthia
Malekba, Gloria
Mammen, Edward W.
Melhem, D. H.*
Merla, Patrick
Mikenas, Edward
Milstein, Stuart*
Morgan, Richard
Mosler, Charles
Murphy, Frank*
Murray, Catherine*
Nelson, Stanley
Newman, Louis*
O'Brien, Michael
Packard, William
Paley, Grace
Paris, James R.
Payne, John Burnett*
Pell, Lewis
Percehow, Henri
Peters, Robert

Pierce, Richard
Piochowski, Krystyna
Porthy, Gregory
Powell, Shirley*
Prada, Beatrice Maria
Press, Simone
Quist, Susan
Redmond, Michael
Rees, Gomer
Reinhold, Robert
Robson, Ernest
Rose, Harriet
Roseman, Sabrina J.
Rosten, Norman
Ruby, Kathryn
Russo, Diane
Rutherford, Brett*
Sanchez, Sonia
Sands, Susan
Saslow, Helen
Sassman, Paulette
Savrousky, Serge
Sayhovic, Olivera
Schell, Susan
Schopick, Julia
Schor, Susan
Scott, Nancy
Shands, Annette

Silbert, Layle
Silver, Howard
Silverman, Herschel
Sivack, Denis
Snyder, Elaine
Solán, Miriam
Speath, Merrie
Spalding, Ron
Steingesser, Martin
Stepanchev, Steven
Stock, Robert
Story, James C.
Strothers, Lee
Swenson, Karen
Tucker, Harvey
Unterecher, John
Vasquez, Paul
Verne, Beatrice
Vollmuth, P. K.
Vrbowska, Anca
Wallace, Pat
Whipple, Dick
Wiese, Juel
Williams, Ozzie S.
Witten, Anne
Wolfgram, Eunice
Zario, Richard A.
Zeldis, Chayym

* Poets also appearing in Poet's Press editions.



The Poet's Press

PITTSBURGH, PA

ABOUT THIS BOOK

The body text for this book is Plantin. Several attractive modern fonts, including Galliard and Plantin, are based on typefaces originally designed by Robert Granjon (1513-1589), a prolific type designer and founder active in Paris, in the shop of Christoph Plantin, and later in Rome at the Vatican. In 1913, Monotype issued several versions of Plantin, based on some of Granjon's designs. Section and main titles are set in Franklin Gothic Black. Poem titles are set in Schneidler Black.

